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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
LANSING
METRO REGION OFFICE

GLORIA J. JEFF
DIRECTOR

October 28, 2004

Dear Concerned Citizen:

As a follow-up to the citizen-sponsored meeting that occurred on August 18, 2004, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) would like the opportunity to explain to those who have not been involved in the I-75 Oakland County Planning/Environmental Study, where the study process now stands and the next steps to be taken.

The I-75 Oakland County Planning/Environmental Study began in 1999 with a feasibility study that included five (5) public meetings and concluded in 2000. It recommended a capacity improvement for the length of I-75 within Oakland County along with local road improvements. The freeway is currently three lanes and operates well over capacity, with congestion readily evident. To address this congestion, the feasibility study recommended a lane addition to the three-lane sections of I-75 only.

In 2002, the current phase of analysis began to study the best capacity improvement for the corridor and to initiate the environmental documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The work has included a broad and comprehensive public involvement program, and has offered many opportunities for public involvement. In total, over the past two years, MDOT has conducted the following:

- One (1) agency scoping meeting
- Individual meetings with city managers, city engineers or planners of each municipality and/or stakeholders along the corridor; approximately nine (9) meetings
- Four (4) public meetings
- Five (5) I-75 Council meetings
- A toll-free telephone hotline
- A dedicated project website with e-mail
- One (1) public hearing

The project also offers a website that hosts reports, including the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The toll-free telephone hotline has provided the means for call-ins of questions, suggestions and other comments. All I-75 Council meetings included invitations to the technical and local officials of each municipality along the corridor (Hazel Park, Madison Heights, Troy, Ferndale, Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Township, and Royal Oak), the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Oakland County, SMART, the City of Detroit, and the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC). Private citizens also attended I-75 Council meetings as did representatives of the Transportation Improvement Association of Oakland County (TIA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The meetings were open to the public and meeting notes are provided on the website for those unable to attend.

The publication of the DEIS occurred in December 2003. It presented two alternatives in detail, including impacts and potential mitigation. The two alternatives analyzed were a lane addition for use by all vehicles and the lane addition dedicated to High Occupancy Vehicles (HOVs), such as carpools and buses, during the peak hours of travel (approximately 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.) with the remaining 20 hours per day, as a lane available to all vehicles.

The formal public hearing was held on January 27, 2004. A host of MDOT and consultant personnel were present to address questions on an individual basis. A continuously-running video provided study project information. The same video was provided to local municipalities to run on local cable stations. Large-scale aerials posted on the walls showed details. Court recorders took formal comments and comment forms were also collected from those people who chose to express their opinions in writing, rather than to the court recorders. Approximately 7,000 hearing notices were mailed four weeks in advance of the hearing and it was advertised on the project website, in the Oakland Press, the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press. The DEIS and supporting technical reports were available for 30 days in advance of the hearing in local libraries and MDOT offices and are also on the study website.

The period within which one could comment on the DEIS remained open until March 12, 2004. Comments were received through the US mail, MDOT comment forms, e-mail, and fax. In total, MDOT received 119 pieces of correspondence during the official comment period. The public hearing attracted approximately 70 people, including local officials and private and concerned citizens.

During this time, MDOT was contacted by the cities of Royal Oak and Madison Heights to further discuss concerns regarding proposed improvements at I-696 that are included in the DEIS. MDOT met with these cities in April 2004. Concerns, particularly regarding local impacts, were discussed. The meeting concluded with MDOT committing to do additional traffic analysis and to reconvene with the cities' engineers before any decisions were made, and before the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

We are currently in the process of examining potential traffic movements and impacts that could result from proposed modifications in the interchange area. The improvements proposed in the DEIS respond to the high crash rate in this area. Incidents at this interchange back up both freeways daily, often resulting in injury and property damage crashes. MDOT is working on a list of mitigation measures that would accompany the implementation of any improvements to the area.

MDOT is also compiling the comments received during the official comment period and will respond to them in the FEIS. It is expected that this will be completed in late 2004.

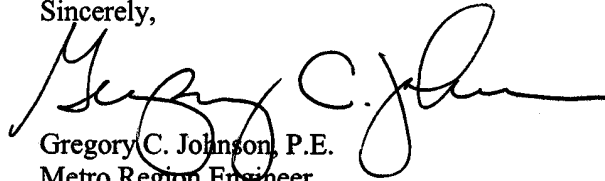
Opportunities for public involvement will continue through the remaining I-75 study and through the design phase, as well. A public meeting is anticipated to be scheduled after the development of MDOT's version of the FEIS. The document will be a "draft" until FHWA's review/approval, which may involve additional changes from what MDOT offers.

It should be noted that due to the Governor's "Preserve First Fix It First" program, the design and construction for this project have been deferred to a future five-year plan, but the study was allowed to continue to completion. The study phase will be considered complete upon FHWA's signing of the Record of Decision. This document responds to any substantive public comments on the FEIS, and when approved by FHWA, will outline mitigation measures that may be necessary to implement the project. After FHWA approval and signature of the ROD, the project will be eligible to move into the design and construction phases of the project, depending on funding availability and the Governor's Fix It First Program.

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Please review the enclosed figure for the process described above and visit the study Web site at www.mdot.state.mi.us/projects/I-75corridor/ for additional information. You may also call the toll-free hotline number, at 1-866-GOFIX75 or 1-866-463-4975, to be added to the mailing list.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory C. Johnson", written over the typed name.

Gregory C. Johnson, P.E.
Metro Region Engineer

Enclosure

